GOVT DOUBLES UNIVERSITY LOAN SCHEME SLOTS

BY MARTIN KITUBI

To the needy students out there, the Government has responded to your call by doubling the number of slots available under the university loan scheme.

With effect from the next financial year, 2026/2027, the Government will sponsor a total of 3,000 students for higher education through the loan scheme programme. The move will see an addition of at least 50% (about 1,500 slots) of the total number of eligible candidates.

Sources familiar with the development explained that the Government has allocated sh10b additional financing in the next year's budget to cater for more beneficiaries under the scheme.

Over the years, the Government has been supporting at least 1,500 students on average under the scheme. The increase in numbers, the source said, is in line with the education ministry's five-year strategic plan, whose implementation has started.

Education ministry budget documents seen by Weekend Vision also confirm that the number of loan scheme beneficiaries will be doubled next year.

"In the financial year 2026/2027, an additional allocation of sh10b has been earmarked to support the scheme, increasing the total budget to sh33.439b. Based on current projections, the ministry anticipates supporting at least 3,000 new beneficiaries," reads one of the Ministry's documents.



Graduands celebrating at Makerere University. 1, 500 additional slots are available for needy students for the financial year 2026/2027

GOVERMENT'S TAKE

According to Dr Chrysosm Muyingo, the State Minister for Higher Education, the loan scheme has become popular, with thousands of people seeking to benefit from it.

This, he said, is the reason why the Government had to look for more funding for more learners to benefit from the loan scheme.

"Many students are applying for these loans, but our resource envelope can only cater for a few. But I want to assure you that the National Resistance Movement Government is determined to increase funding to this programme. We have something in the next year's budget," he said.

According to the education ministry data, between 5,000 and 7,000 students apply for the loan scheme annually. A significant proportion of applicants who meet the eligibility and short-listing criteria are genuinely needy and deserving; however, due to limited financial resources, only approximately 30% can be supported.

While presenting its Ministerial Policy Statement before the Parliamentary Committee on Education and Sports, on April 10, the ministry had indicated that they needed sh13.5b additional Sh13.5 billion to double the number of beneficiaries.

The ministry also noted that they had come up with a strategy which strengthens legal, institutional and operational systems for loan recovery through clear stakeholder roles and enhanced borrower sensitisation. To recover the money, ministry officials told MPs that they will craft an employer-based repayment mechanism, technology-driven tracking and data integration and structured enforcement measures to improve loan recovery.

Dr Kedrace Turyagyenda, the ministry's permanent secretary, explained that the sector budget will be enhanced in the next financial year to cover several key areas, including the loan scheme.

According to government records, 11,709 beneficiaries have completed their studies and are currently within the loan repayment cycle, representing a loan portfolio valued at sh141.9b. These loans are repayable over a period ranging from 4 to 12 years.

BETWEEN 5,000 TO 7,000 STUDENTS APPLY FOR THE LOAN SCHEME ANNUALLY, BUT AVAILABLE FUNDS WOULD ONLY SUPPORT LESS THAN 30% OF ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS.

LOAN ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION

In determining eligibility, the education ministry takes into consideration the district quota, gender, socioeconomic needs and equity during selection. Applicants are subsequently ranked according to their total scores, from the highest to the lowest, to determine relative levels of need.

The application process is online-driven via the education ministry website and the applicant is required to attach a copy of an admission letter from any university or tertiary institution, a copy of the national identity card, copies of academic certificates or result slips and transcripts.

The applicant is also required to attach a copy of a birth certificate, a copy of the recent passport photo, proof of payment of the prescribed processing fees, two sketch maps of the applicant's current address and another for the applicant's home of origin, if different from the current address.

PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

There are 11 participating public universities, including Busitema, Gulu, Kabale, Kyambogo, Lira, Makerere, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Muni, Soroti, Mountains of the Moon University and Makerere University Business School, a Constituent college of Makerere University.

The participating private chartered universities include African Bible University, Bishop Stuart, Bugema, International University of East Africa, ISBAT, Islamic University in Uganda, Kampala International University, Kampala University, Muteesa I Royal, Ndejje, Nkumba, Uganda Christian University, Uganda Martyrs University, University of Kisubi, Victoria University and Africa Renewal University.

Unlike at the university level, all the 33 participating TVET institutions are public. These offer programmes in allied health, nursing and midwifery, technical and meteorology, agriculture, tourism and hospitality.

Under the allied health training, the institutes include the Uganda Institute of Allied Health & Mgt Sciences, Mulago, Health Tutors' College – Mulago, Fort Portal College of Health Sciences, as well as Mbale and Gulu Colleges of Health Sciences. The list also includes Butabika School of Psychiatry Clinical Medicine, Jinja School of Ophthalmic Clinical Medicine, School of Hygiene, Mbale and Jinja Medical Laboratory Training School, completing the category.

Under the category of Nursing and Midwifery, the training institutions include Arua School of Comprehensive Nursing, Butabika Psychiatric Nursing School, Jinja School of Nursing & Midwifery, as well asLira, Masaka, Kabale and Soroti Schools of Comprehensive Nursing. The list also includes Mulago School of Nursing &Midwifery and Public Health Nurses' College.

In addition, there are 10 technical colleges and meteorological and survey institutions, which include the Institute of Survey and Land Management, National Meteorological Training School, Nakawa Vocational Training College and Uganda Institute of Information and Communications Technology.

The list also includes the Uganda Petroleum Institute, Kigumba, the five Uganda Technical Colleges in Bushenyi, Elgon, Kichwamba, Kyema and Lira.

Under the agricultural and conservation category, the colleges include Bukalasa Agricultural College, Uganda Wildlife Research &Training Institute – Kasese, Fisheries Training Institute and Nyabyeya Forestry College.

The list also includes Uganda Hotel and Tourism Training Institute, Jinja as the only tourism institute.

STATISTICS

The number of loan scheme beneficiaries has been fluctuating, ranging between 1,000 and 1,500 students annually based on the availability of funds.

During the 2024/2025 financial year, the Government supported a total of 1,552 beneficiaries under the loan scheme. That year, a total of sh16.5b to 45 participating universities and technical colleges was disbursed as loans to students. The funds also covered continuing students who are already enrolled in the scheme.

In the current financial year 2025/2026, the Government disbursed a total of sh7.6b as loans to students and a total of 2,048 new loan scheme beneficiaries were selected. The student loan scheme programme has been running since the financial year 2014/2015.

To date, a total of 18,501 beneficiaries, including 12,326 males and 6,175 females, have benefited from the programme. Of these, 15,427 beneficiaries were pursuing undergraduate degree programmes, while 3,074 were pursuing undergraduate diplomas.

In addition, the loan scheme has provided support to 179 persons with disabilities, including 136 males and 43 females, under its affirmative action framework. While learners with special needs can apply for both humanities and science programmes, the other applicants are restricted to science courses only.

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